

## REMARKS

### Status of Claims

Claims 37-44 are canceled, without prejudice.

Claims 3-6, 22, 23, 25, 27 and 34 are currently amended.

Claims 1-36 are currently pending.

### Restriction Requirement

Applicants affirm election of claims 1-36 (Group I), reserving the right to assert claims to the subject matter of the non-elected claims in a continuation application. Accordingly, claims 37-44 are canceled.

### Specification

Paragraphs [0015], [0064], [0066] and [0071] of the specification have been amended to update the status of the U.S. Patent Applications referred to therein.

### Claim Objections

Claim 3 is amended hereinabove to expressly recite "amount" and "needed," which are implicit in the claim as originally worded and supported in the specification at paragraphs [0019] and [0082], for example. Claims 4, 5 and 6 are amended to recite "first" instead of "initial," for better consistency with the wording of claim 3.

Claims 22, 23, 25, 27 and 34 have been amended to correct typographical errors in claim numbering.

### Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 112, Second Paragraph

Claim 3 is additionally amended to provide that less than the stoichiometric amount of O<sub>2</sub> needed (in the partial oxidation reaction) to convert all of the H<sub>2</sub>S in the first feed stream is present in the initial incremental amount of O<sub>2</sub>. This results in a first stage product gas stream containing S<sup>0</sup>, steam and unreacted H<sub>2</sub>S. It is clear that not all of the H<sub>2</sub>S in the first feed is converted in the first stage. The second and third stages are amended similarly. It is also clear that not all of the unreacted H<sub>2</sub>S in the first stage product gas stream is converted in the second stage, and not all of the unreacted H<sub>2</sub>S in the second stage product gas stream is converted in the third stage.

Claim 4 is currently amended to recite "first feed gas stream" instead of "initial feed gas mixture," in order to be consistent with the terminology of claim 3.

**Notice of Co-owned Patents/Applications**

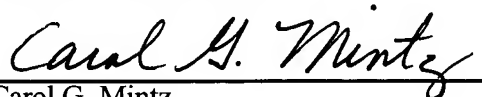
The Office is respectfully requested to take notice of the following patents and applications that are co-owned with the present application, and which contain related subject matter:

6,403,051  
6,579,510  
6,946,111  
6,800,269  
10/118,135 (2002/0119091)  
10/317,936 (2003/0129123)  
11/034,322 (2005/0180914)  
11/225,355

**Conclusion**

Reconsideration of the application and withdrawal of the rejections are requested in light of the foregoing amendments and remarks. Applicants respectfully request allowance of the pending claims. If any item in the Office Action has been overlooked or is deemed to be incompletely addressed, Applicants respectfully request the opportunity to respond. If a petition for extension of time is necessary in order for this paper to be deemed timely filed, please consider this a petition therefore. If any fee is due, please appropriately charge such fee to Deposit Account Number 03-2769 (ref. 1856-37500) of Conley Rose, P.C., Houston, Texas.

Respectfully submitted,



Carol G. Mintz  
PTO Reg. No. 38,561  
CONLEY ROSE, P.C.  
P.O. Box 3267  
Houston, Texas 77253-3267  
(713) 238-8000  
AGENT FOR APPLICANTS